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Sent: 10/1/2020 7:31:40 PM
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White House Memo Not Slowing EPA Justice Work, Wheeler Says (1)

Sept. 30, 2020, 11:17 AM; Updated: Sept. 30, 2020, 12:55 PM

A recent White House memo that scuttled an EPA training session on environmental problems in low-income communities of color won't affect the agency's overall environmental justice program, Administrator Andrew Wheeler told reporters Wednesday.

The Environmental Protection Agency put the session "on hold" because agency officials wanted to "take a deeper look as far as the materials themselves," Wheeler said. Politico first reported that the EPA had canceled a speaker series for agency employees.

- Wheeler said he considers the Office of Management and Budget [memo](#) "very appropriate." Training that marginalizes groups of people is a misuse of taxpayer dollars, and few of the EPA's training sessions are likely inappropriate, Wheeler added.
- Wheeler also said the EPA has elevated environmental justice by moving the program from the enforcement office to the administrator's office. By doing so, the agency is able to focus on environmental justice "across the entire program at EPA and everything we do, including the development of policies, and the development of regulations," he said.

- Democrats on the House Oversight and Reform Committee asked the White House on Wednesday for information about the Trump administration’s cancellation of the training. The order shows “a level of ignorance rarely seen at executive levels in government or the private sector,” the lawmakers said.
- The EPA has conducted training on diversity and inclusion in most of its programs, and held listening sessions after the May killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis.
- On Monday, the EPA’s Office of Inspector General said the agency must bulk up oversight of its civil rights program to make sure agencies that receive its funding aren’t discriminating against racial minorities.

(Revises with comment from House Democrats in third bullet point.)

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